

Coast to Capital

Meeting: Skills 360 Board Meeting
Date: 02 June 2020
Report Title: Review of skills priorities in response to COVID-19
Report by: Kirsten Trussell
Item No: Item 3
Part: A

Recommendation:

The Board is asked to:

- **agree** the proposed parameters for a data refresh
- **note and discuss** the emerging findings of the impact of COVID-19 on the employment and skills landscape in the Coast to Capital area
- **agree** a set of draft priorities based on early evidence which will be reviewed when we have refreshed the data

1. Context

The Skills 360 Board agreed a broad set of priorities at its meeting in November 2019 following a comprehensive desk top analysis of data and evidence and supplementary fieldwork. These priorities can be found at **Annex 1**.

Further refinement of the priorities was underway alongside the development of a skills action plan but was paused as a result of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Unfortunately, early evidence shows that the Coast to Capital economy has been particularly badly hit, mainly as a result of its reliance on the airport economy, but also because of the high numbers of businesses which serve the tourism, event and hospitality sectors based mainly in rural and coastal areas.

It is essential that we test the priorities that the Board has identified in light of the impact of COVID-19 and this paper begins to explore what data we will need to do that and uses SWOT analyses to take a look at how the picture has changed two months in based on what we know already without a desk top data review. Finally the paper sets out an early draft of a series of updated priorities based on what we know now and which will be reviewed when we have refreshed the data.

2. Data refresh

We have developed a comprehensive [Economic Profile](#) for the Coast to Capital area as part of our preparation for writing a Local Industrial Strategy (LIS). Now we need to carry out a COVID-19 impact assessment and have chosen to commission a review of core economic data and a detailed SWOT analysis. In doing this we will be taking into account work that other partnerships such as Coastal West Sussex and Gatwick Diamond have already commissioned.

We have considered what we need to know about the short-term impact of COVID-19 on employment and skills in the Coast to Capital area. We suggest that in particular we need to understand the following (we are limited by the availability and reliability of 'near to live' data):

- a) The impact of COVID-19 on the employment status of the working age population? (employed/unemployed/furloughed by people and by place)
- b) The impact of COVID-19 on the education, employment and training status of the 16-18 population (employment, education and training data from LAs)
- c) The impact of COVID-19 on business recruitment by sector, business and occupation type?
- d) The difference in Coronavirus health impacts (infection/death rates) across different parts of our area. Are there long term health consequences for our workforce in particular areas? Data and studies have demonstrated a correlation between income and health deprivation as well as specific demographic characteristics which an increased personal Coronavirus impacts.

We would hope to have refreshed and reviewed the data and explored its short-term impact by end of June so that we can finalise a draft set of priorities and proposed activities over the summer.

We are exploring various sources of this data and will work with local partners to gather and analyse it in the most effective way. We are currently assessing the potential to purchase a licence for a software programme that will do much of the analysis for us and will help us to build in-house analytical capacity as encouraged by the DfE Skills Advisory Panel team. We will need to build in a regular review of data to monitor the medium and longer term impacts of COVID-19 on the economy and to explore the trends that start to emerge.

3. Impact assessment

Once we have refreshed our data we will be in a better position to understand the short to medium-term impact of COVID-19 on the employment and skills landscape in Coast to Capital.

To assist in that process we have laid out the findings from our recent [Skills and Labour Market Study](#) and Economic Profile in a 'before onset of COVID-19' SWOT

analysis (see table 1 Annex 2).

We have begun to draft a 'two months after the onset of COVID 19' SWOT analysis (see table 2 Annex 2) which is based mainly on what we have learned anecdotally. This is for discussion at the meeting in June and we will test this thinking once we have refreshed the data.

4. Reviewing our priorities

We propose two overarching priorities which are set out in summary below (more detail can be found in Annex 3). It is important to consider where the short, medium and long term focus sits with these priorities, particularly for priority 2 - Business. .

Priority 1: PEOPLE

The main areas of focus before COVID-19 were:

- **FINDING OUT ABOUT WORK** - supporting young people to find out about and gain more experience of the world of work.
- **STAYING IN WORK** - helping people to remain in high quality well-paid work and to progress their careers. This will now include those at risk of redundancy as a result of COVID-19.

The proposed additional areas of focus are:

- **STARTING OUT IN WORK** - a renewed focus on getting young people (the class of 2020 and beyond) into work to avoid a generation of high youth unemployment.
- **GETTING BACK INTO WORK** - supporting people back into work, specifically those who have lost their jobs as a result of COVID-19, with a focus on those who may face a particular disadvantage such as younger and older workers, those with low level skills or in areas significantly affected by the crisis (e.g. Crawley)

Priority 2: BUSINESS

- **RETAINING AND TRAINING THE WORKFORCE** – helping businesses to improve their understanding of and engagement with their workforce to improve retention of experienced and skilled staff and increase overall workforce efficiency and business productivity. In the short term businesses may need to rationalise their workforce in order to reduce costs but keep longer term growth in mind.
- **WORKING TOGETHER** – bringing businesses and education providers together to build a better understanding of current and future skills needs and

to develop collaborative approaches.

- **MAKING THE MOST OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY** – helping business owners and senior managers to understand the role that digital technology can have in the success of their business, particularly in the recovery from COVID-19.

5. Conclusion

The full extent of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis is not yet known and is not likely to be for a long time. The work that we are proposing in this paper and the priorities that we establish will enable us to address some of the short to medium term challenges whilst moving forward with plans to address some of the longer term entrenched challenges that the area faces and that were identified as a part of the LIS development.

We will continue to monitor the economic profile of the Coast to Capital economy and review and refresh the Skills 360 Board priorities and action plan accordingly.

6. Next Steps

- Data refresh
- Review 'after' SWOT analysis following the data refresh
- Finalise draft skills priorities and action plan over the summer

7. Diversity Statement

There are no diversity implications for consideration regarding the recommendations set out in this paper.

8. Legal Statement

There are no legal implications for consideration regarding the recommendations set out in this paper.

Annexes:

- Annex 1 – Skills 360 Board Priorities Pre Covid-19
- Annex 2 – SWOT Analyses
- Annex 3 – Skills 360 Board Emerging Priorities